

with the usual promises, but nothing was done till 1279, when an Act was passed forbidding aliens to hold benefices in England, and punishing all who should farm for them the rent of their ecclesiastical estates. A second statute to the same effect was passed in 1283.<sup>1</sup> But Richard the Second and his council had no more intention of executing these Acts than his grandfather had of executing the Statutes of Provisory. He not only permitted the Pope to continue his appointments of Cardinals, but sometimes confirmed them by royal licence.<sup>2</sup>

At the price of these unpatriotic concessions the King secured the Papal acquiescence in his own nominations to bishoprics and benefices. He had besides another motive for keeping on good terms with the Court of Avignon. That Court was a centre not only of religion but of diplomacy. The support of the Pope was a high card in the game for the French Crown played between the Houses of Plantagenet and Valois. Edward had vainly negotiated for it when he first brought forward his famous claim.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the peace, and during the second and more disastrous war, the goodwill or neutrality of Avignon was still of great importance to England. The Pope had much power in the districts which we ruled in the South of France, though his submission depended to some degree on his attitude.<sup>4</sup> When in 1377 Gregory the Eleventh removed his Court to Rome, an opportunity was created for restoring English influence in the Curia. But the French Cardinals were not slow to elect a rival Pope. Europe was split into two diplomatic camps. The allies of France, including Spain, Naples and Scotland, recognised Clement the Seventh; England, Portugal and the Northern nations recognised Urban the Sixth.

Our footing at Rome or Avignon, on which much high value was set at Westminster, could only be preserved by forming an English party among the Cardinals, who had the ear of the Pope at home and acted as his ambassadors abroad. Such a party was maintained out of English benefices, which were the cheapest and most convenient bribes for the English

\* *Stats. of R. Balm.* B. II. 3, 7 B. II. 11, \* See Ap.

» *Wals.*, i. 201-15.

\* *Calendar of Papal Registers*, iv. 1-70,